

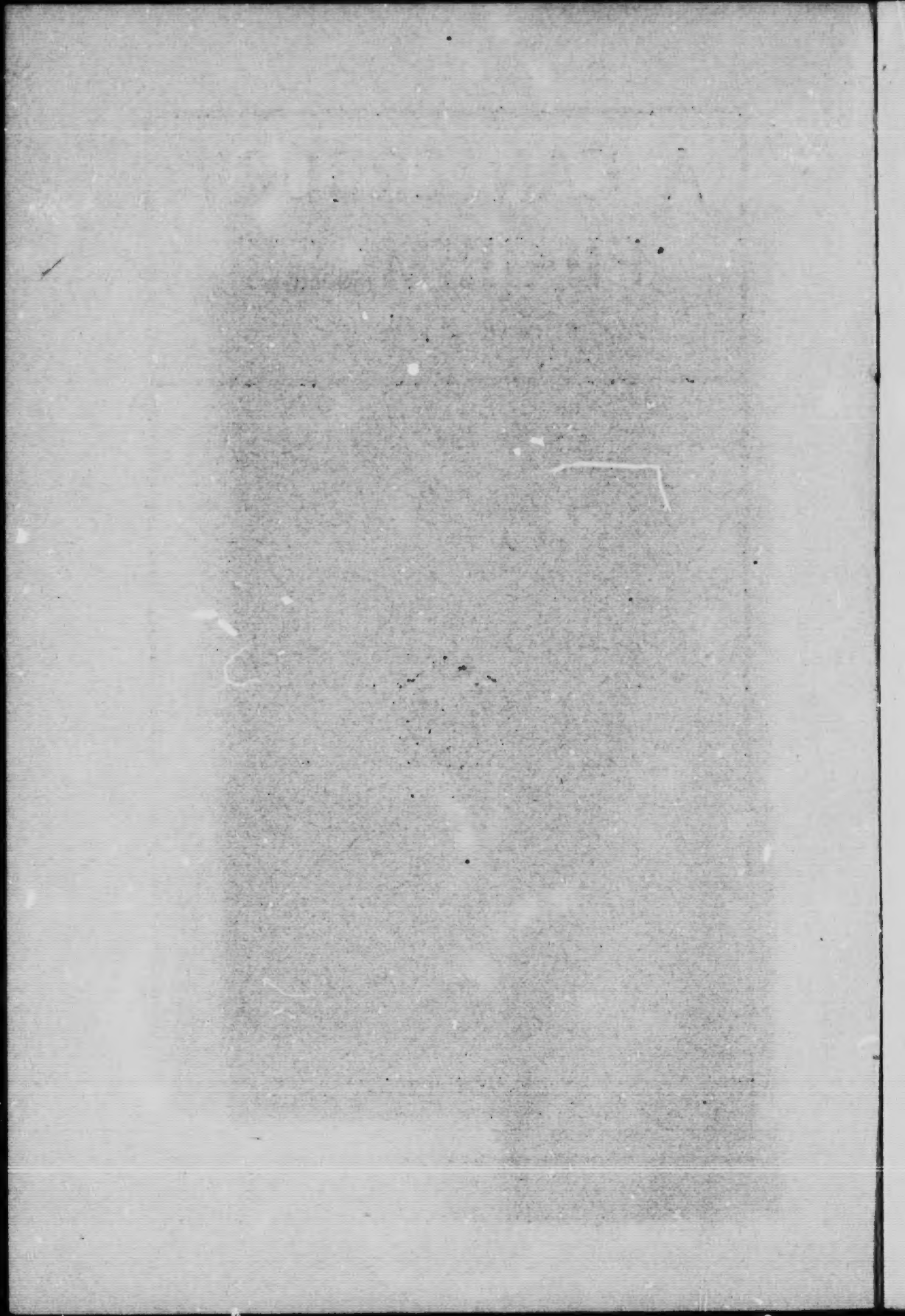
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A CANTERBURY PILGRIMAGE

By **DAVID R. KEYS, M.A.**



PRESS
WILLIAM BRIGGS
TORONTO



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Der's fühlend erst erschafft, der's teilend mehrt."
—Schiller's "Wallenstein."

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"The gift of myself."

With best wishes for 1906.

W. G. Atkins

from

D. L. Keys.

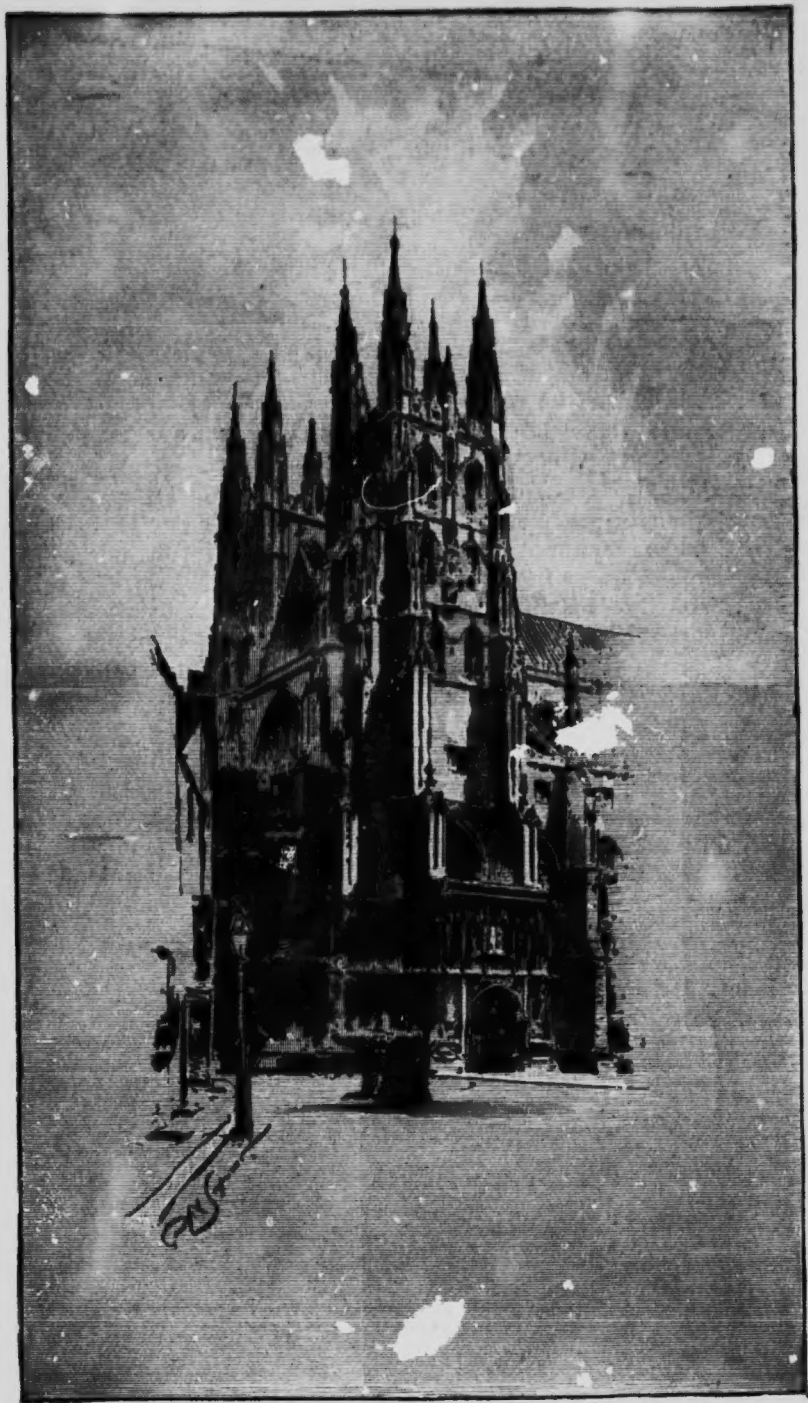
A Canterbury Pilgrimage*

BY DAVID R. KEYS, M.A.

"Denn über alles Glück geht doch der Freund,
Der's fühlend erst erschafft, der's teilend mehrt."
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I T was the month of June, 1892. The London season was at its height. The parks were resplendent in the beauty of nature, and Rotten Row was filled with the finest specimens of English humankind. The friends who made London so homelike, and to whom, in the words of Byron, the shadows of far years extended, had never been so friendly or so eager to assist the Canadian cousin to renew his acquaintance with the ancient metropolis. A new friend had taken the place of the two fellow-travellers who had, in the previous year, added another to the many delightful memories of visits to London town. This friend was a German *privat-docent*, whose acquaintance I had made in Leipzig the previous summer, and who had recently been appointed professor of the English language in the Leland Stanford University, of California. Ewald Flügel, the grandson of the first lexicographer of that name, whose earliest recollection was of copying out references for the dictionary, had for years been collaborating with his father in what was becoming a family heirloom of the most interesting kind, Flügel's German-English and English-German Dictionary. With such ancestry his knowledge of the English language was like Sam Weller's knowledge of the English capital. From my experiences of the past weeks, I had drawn the conclusion that the genial Flügel's intimacy with London lanes and houses was almost as great as that of "Samivel" himself. Frequent holiday visits to the British Museum, that great goal of "the programme-mongering German," and the German philologist's wide acceptance of the meaning of his vocation, had made Professor Flügel a far better guide to the literary pilgrim than my earlier companions, the Templar, the Editor, or even the Londoner born in Craven Street itself, within a stone's throw of Charing Cross. A book on Sir Philip Sidney had been the cause of his presence in England that summer, and we had worked together over several of Sidney's letters in the museum and the Record Office, among others the last he wrote after receiving his fatal wound at Zutphen.

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CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL.

The previous summer I had heard him give a course on Chaucer in Germany, and so when he proposed that we should visit Canterbury on our way back to Leipzig, I felt that not all the attractions of London in June could equal the pleasures of such an excursion with so congenial a fellow-pilgrim. So we packed our gladstones and took a hansom to Charing Cross station.

Looking from the train as it crossed the bridge over the Thames, we saw below us the embankment which has so greatly improved the appearance of London. My companion was surprised to hear that I had seen London in the days before the embankment, when the old Northumberland House still stood on Trafalgar Square, and all the riverside remained as Dickens described it. We could see as we came out from the station and looked up the river towards Westminster Bridge, the St. Thomas Hospital, named after that saint, to whose shrine we were making pilgrimage after a very modern fashion. Our attention was thus called at the very outset to the characteristic persistence of the saint's influence in conservative England. Indeed, English conservatism had already made itself felt in the extremely antique quality of the cars.

The London, Chatham and Dover Railway seems to have kept all the old uncomfortable cars, which were in use in the early days of which Dickens and Thackeray wrote in the first half of the century. Yet, withal, it was a great saving of time and money, as compared with the three or four days usually occupied in making the journey to the shrine of St. Thomas during Chaucer's lifetime. But, as Frederic Harrison has remarked, the nineteenth century traveller gets no such impression of the country through which he is whirled, as did the men who rode on horseback through Europe in the middle ages. Best mode of all is that genuine pilgrim's progress on foot, although the German parson, Moritz, of whom Austin Dobson tells, found himself so badly treated when he took his walk through the Midland Counties in 1782. My German fellow-traveller and I had done many a mile on foot together in the environs of Leipzig during the previous summer, but time forbade our making this a walking tour, much as we should have preferred it to the dirty, dusty and uncomfortable cars of the L. C. and D.

As we were whirled under the tunnel of Sydenham Palace, the contrast between the two modes of locomotion was borne in upon us strongly. When we left the tunnel again we were

passing through one of the fairest sylvan scenes in the Mother Isle. The hop-fields of Kent were stretched out almost as far as the eye could reach, with little clusters of houses, and with the beautiful gardens, and hedges, and groves of trees, that make England so different from the continent, either of Europe or of North America. The only country that resembles Great Britain, as seen from a car window, is Denmark, where it would seem as if the similiarity of conditions in being protected by the sea had led to the same freedom from the necessity of living in villages, and not in separate farm-houses. To my friend, familiar with the bare plains of Saxony and Prussia, the



THE OLD NORMAN PORCH.

landscape was as attractive in its variety as it appeared to myself, in contrast with our crude countryside.

At Faversham we had to change cars, and while we waited on the platform we discussed the curious English fashion of altering proper names, so that the spelling ceases to be a key to the pronunciation. This town, famous as the scene of one of the spurious plays of Shakespeare, "*Arden of Faversham*," is pronounced *Feversham*. Further back we had passed Rotherhithe, whence Fielding started on his famous trip to Lisbon, and where he had such difficulty in boarding the *Queen of Portugal*. This town is called *Redrith* by the natives, who know

the "Yankee," when he speaks of "Rotherhithe." A few days before, when on my way to visit friends at Ramsgate, I had met here an English gentleman, who had been interested in hearing I was from Canada, but who waxed rather indignant at my asking him if he thought Mr. Edward Blake would achieve distinction in the House of Commons. He was evidently himself a member of that select club. To him I owed my enlightenment on the pronunciation of Redrith and Fevversham, although Ellis' "Early English Pronunciation" supplied a great many other even more remarkable examples. My German friend playfully suggested that it was for the purpose of making English, otherwise so easy, a more difficult language to speak correctly. I suggested it was a means of differentiating Yankees and colonials, but he thought they were already sufficiently marked by their nasal accents.

By this time our train arrived, and we were soon over the last ten miles of our journey, and landed in Canterbury, the ecclesiastical capital of England, and the most interesting city of the size I ever visited.

The walk from the station to the town took us past a great mound called Dane John, a case of *Volksetymologie*, or popular etymology, as Professor Flügel said, being an evident attempt to convert the Norman donjon into a Danish ancestor. The old Norman keep of the castle is just within the wall, and in modern times diffuses light, if not sweetness, as a gas works. As we walked through the streets we were both struck with a resemblance to Chester, that rare old English city which has helped so many Americans to revivify the Middle Ages.

From our first leaving the station our thoughts had been centred on the great cathedral, whose magnificent pile rose within the city, which it seemed to dominate with an imperial sway. It was about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, the weather was as perfect as English June weather can be. And what so fair as a day in June? We had earned a holiday by two weeks of hard work, and as we sauntered across past Marlowe's monument, we felt something of the old pilgrim's peace of mind still pervading that sacred close, and attuning our spirits unto theirs.

Poor Marlowe, though a Canterbury boy, had escaped too early from the skyeey influences of that holy fane. One of us had made Elizabethan literature his specialty for six years, the other had been lecturing on Shakespeare even longer; we both stood silent before the statue of Shakespeare's great teacher, whose pleasant vices had become his fatal scourge. The mood

of melancholy seemed suited to the calm afternoon and the summer season and the many memories aroused by that overpowering cathedral. St. Peter's is less impressive when seen from the square than when you first behold its lofty dome from the train miles away. So, too, the towers of Köln are more



SCENE OF BECKET'S MURDER.

impressive from the steamer than from the street. But Canterbury Cathedral has a majesty like that of buried Denmark, it inspires a feeling of reverence that may be the far-off interest of the centuries during which the religious emotions of thousands were called forth by its associations, and now these in their turn

are contributing to swell this flood that makes for holy awe. The quiet of the cathedral town had prepared us for the deeper calm of the cloisters, and the yet more solemn stillness within. There were very few strangers about, and for a while we enjoyed in silence the devout calm of the interior.

Presently appeared the inevitable verger, and we were taken in tow and brought around to see the sights of the great church, with which no other church in England can compare, except Westminster Abbey. Like the Abbey, Christ Church Cathedral represents three different churches that have been built in the seventh, eleventh and fourteenth centuries. The first was founded by St. Augustine, the first evangelist of Kent, who was sent to England by St. Gregory, the author of the "Pastoral Care," in 597. During Anglo-Saxon times the famous Dunstan, whose short and ready way with the devil was more strenuous than Martin Luther's, and the martyred Elphege, whose brains were dashed out by the Danes in 1007, are the best known successors of Augustine. Canterbury, the capital of the Kingdom of Kent, was the obvious seat of the first archbishop; and as the faith grew in England, and Kent became absorbed in Wessex, and Wessex gradually extended its sway over the other Saxon and Anglian kingdoms, the Archbishop of Canterbury came to be the primate of all England. The recent visit of Dr. Davidson has, to some extent, familiarized Canadians with the curious privileges of the primacy. He is the first citizen of the realm; he can make doctors of law and medicine; his income is almost equal to that of the Governor-General of Canada and the President of the United States combined. Among his many predecessors, whose names Macaulay could cite off-hand—Odo, Lanfranc and Anselm were the most notable up to the time of Thomas a Becket, as Langton, Cranmer and Laud have been since. The name of Gervase of Canterbury recalls the memory of Gervase Smith, the great English Methodist, who lectured on Wycliffe in Richmond Street Church, Toronto, some thirty-five years ago, when Dr. Morley Punshon occupied the chair. Even as far back as Dunstan's time the monks of the rival monastery could quote with pride his saying that every footstep he took within their precincts was planted on the grave of a saint.

One great event, on December 29th, 1170, gave Canterbury Cathedral its pre-eminence among English churches. In the words of the late Dean Stanley, when Canon of Canterbury: "A saint—so it was then almost universally believed—a saint

of unparalleled sanctity had fallen in the church of which he was primate, a martyr for its rights, and his blood, his remains, were in the possession of that church, as an inalienable treasure forever." His last sentences were befitting the lips of a martyr: "Into thy hands, O Lord, I commit my spirit." "For the name of Jesus, and the defence of the Church, I am willing to die."

With the Tennysonian drama fresh in our minds, we viewed with keen interest the small chapel in the north transept, where the great churchman died. It was one of those experiences which, coming at a time of special preparation, are not easily



A BIT OF NATURE'S ARCHITECTURE.

forgotten. The week before we had held in our hands the last letter of Sir Philip Sydney, still stained with his blood. Now we were shown the small square depression which marked the precise spot where Becket's murdered body had lain, as the ruffian knights fled, terrified by the storm which burst over the cathedral just after the deed was perpetrated. When the frightened monks returned they found that the savage blow of Richard le Breton had severed the scalp from the skull, and had snapped the sword in two. They piously collected the blood

and brains, which were scattered over the pavement, and mixing them with water, distributed it in vials to the people, a custom which continued to be characteristic of Canterbury while the pilgrimages lasted.

The body of Becket was buried at first in the crypt, and here, a few years after the murder, another strange scene took place. On Ash Wednesday of 1173 Thomas had been canonized. Meanwhile, King Henry's fortunes had gone from bad to worse, his foreign foes were successfully invading his territory, his people were in revolt, his sons in rebellion, the very powers of nature seemed to rage against the land where the horrid deed had been done. In this crisis the King, who had already expressed his contrition at the death of the martyr, made up his mind to do such public penance as might mollify the foully murdered primate. Crossing over from France, he rode from Southampton to Canterbury, and on catching sight of the cathedral, leaped from his horse, and walked to St. Dunstan's Church outside the walls. There he left his ordinary dress, and walked through the streets as a penitent, barefoot, with no other covering than a woollen shirt and a cloak thrown over it to keep off the rain. So he came, with bleeding feet, to the cathedral, and kneeling at the porch and in the transept, where he kissed the stone on which the Archbishop had fallen, he was conducted thence to the crypt, when he again knelt, and with groans and tears kissed the tomb. After the Bishop of London had proclaimed his penitence, and absolved him, the King removed his outer cloak, and was given a scourging by each of the bishops, abbots and eighty monks, who were present. He then passed the night fasting at Becket's tomb.

This exemplary penance bore immediate fruit. The day he left Canterbury King William the Lion of Scotland was captured by Fife of Glanville, and the invading fleet of his son was driven back by the winds. So much was the Scotch king affected by the saint's power, that he dedicated the Abbey of Aberbrothok to the memory of St. Thomas when he returned to Scotland.

The fame of St. Thomas of Canterbury went over the Continent. After the practice of the time, his relics were sought for and distributed till the very distribution implied miraculous agency. At times strange means were taken to beg a limb of him for memory. In electing Roger, the keeper of the altar, to be their abbot the monks of St. Augustine's Abbey obtained for their church a portion of the remains of the sacred skull.

which had been committed to his care. Fielding at Lisbon might, perhaps, have seen his arms, which were visible there in the days of Tom Fuller. In Verona his tooth was preserved with more care than the bodies of the two ill-starred lovers whose story Shakespeare was to tell.

His name became the favorite in England, more so than those of the Lion-hearted King and the victor of Agincourt. Tom, Dick and Harry doubtless owe their democratic frequency to the historical influence of these three heroes.

His shrine was raised after the fire of 1174 in the new choir



CHAUCEER.

which William of Sens modelled after that beautiful French church.

It took nearly fifty years to make ready for the translation of the relics of St. Thomas, which was carried out with more than regal magnificence by Stephen Langton, on Tuesday, July 7th, 1220, a day celebrated for over three hundred years thereafter as a festival of the English Church. During all those centuries the crowds of pilgrims came to Canterbury, not only "from every shires ende of Engellond," but from all parts of the Continent, where the relics of "St. Thomas of Candelberg," as he was called in Germany, stood in high repute, and shone as a

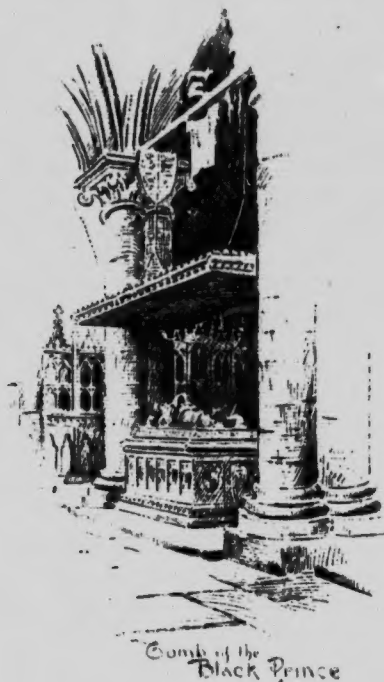
beacon from afar. King Louis the Seventh of France came first of many royal visitors from the mainland. Emmanuel, Emperor of the East; Sigismund, Emperor of the West, came, and the latter's famed successor, Charles the Fifth, visited it in 1520 with Henry VIII. There the conqueror of Agincourt returned thanks for the victory on his way back to London. Thither the Bruces came from Scotland and the Abbot of fair Melrose. Thither among the latest pilgrims came those two men of the Renaissance, who had done so much to weaken the sentiment on which the pilgrimages were based, Colet and Erasmus. The latter had much ado to prevent his friend from shocking the sensibilities of the guardian of the tomb. Another Henry was on the throne of England, one who might well have compared himself with the Second Henry in his relation with the proud Churchman. It is one of the ironies of history that Henry VIII., who had been destined before his brother's death for the See of Canterbury, should be the one who was to destroy the greatest source of its revenues. In 1538, after Thomas a Becket had been formally cited to appear before the court at Westminster to answer the charge of treason, contumacy and rebellion, the *advocatus diaboli* for once prevailed. The court decreed sentence against the saint, that his bones should be publicly burnt, and that the offerings made at the shrine should be forfeited to the crown. His very name was erased from the missals almost as thoroughly as that of Chaucer himself from the records of his time.

The treasures of the shrine were immensely valuable. A single jewel, which had miraculously flown from its setting in the ring of King Louis VII. and attached itself to the coffin, was reputed to be worth a king's ransom. It is variously described as a carbuncle, ruby or diamond, about the size of a hen's egg, and of surpassing brilliance. King Henry VIII. had it made into a ring, which he wore according to the old Teutonic custom, still practised in Germany, on his thumb. Queen Mary, his daughter, did not restore this sacred relic, nor the shrine of the saint, but wore the jewel in her neck-scarf. It disappeared, with many more of the royal jewels, during the reign of James I.

The pilgrims who now visit the site of the shrine find it dismantled, and only the foundation stones to mark where once it stood. The tale of Thomas' trial has been seriously doubted, and, in 1888, it was thought that his bones had been discovered in the crypt, but the news proved incorrect. Whether they be

buried, or, like Sir Henry Irving's, burned, the bones of the great Becket, must always remain the chief source of interest in Canterbury to those two pilgrims, who, like Colet and Erasmus, represented the new learning, though in far different degree.

Not even the great fame of Edward, the Black Prince, could offset, in our minds, the claims of him who had been the ultimate source of Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales." We saw with reverent gaze the very garments of the Black Prince, his hel-



Tomb of the
Black Prince

met, his gauntlets, and his shield; we saw, too, the splendid tomb of Henry IV., who ousted Edward's son from his throne.

In the far eastern chapel, called the Corona, that word of good augury to the German student, we found the chair of St. Augustine, in which the Saxon kings, as well as the early primates, were crowned. So, at least, the verger told us, and was much surprised to hear from us, as we sat together on the massive couch-like throne, that we both *professed* Anglo-Saxon—he in California, I in Canada. Never before in all

probability had two such distant representatives of the language of Alfred sat together in the chair of Augustine.

We went down into the crypt, and found a new source of interest in the French chapel, where the refugees had held their services. And then, after a couple of hours in the cathedral, we returned through the cloisters, and past the Marlowe monument to the little Canterbury streets that had other interesting sights for us to see.

But first we fortified ourselves, not being minded to fast like King Henry, and knowing not what the morrow had in store. We found a typical little English tea-shop, where, as in our Toronto tea-room, we couldn't get a meal, but could buy a cup of tea and some of the toast, by which Austin Dobson betrayed his lack of acquaintance with German life. For to this day one cannot get English toast in Germany unless one lives with Anglicized Germans, or makes it oneself. Having refreshed ourselves with tea we sallied forth to visit St. Martin's Church, "the Mother Church of England," where the coffin of Queen Bertha is still shown, as well as the old font in which King Ethelbert was baptized. Then we went to see the Roper House, where that Margaret Roper lived who was the daughter of Sir Thomas More, and of whom Tennyson wrote—

"Morn broaden'd on the borders of the dark,
Ere I saw her, who clasped in her last trance
Her murdered father's head."

Across the street was the church in which that head was buried, whose gay wit and ready repartee inspired Erasmus to write the "Encomium Moriae."

As we walked through the streets of Canterbury we talked of another gentle daughter, who had won our hearts by her lovely qualities, and who seemed far more real than Becket himself, Agnes Wakefield, and of the slow-witted David Copperfield, who took so long to learn where his true bliss was to be found. Strange that he and Pendennis should both have been so short-sighted. However, though we saw many fresh English faces we met none that satisfied our ideal of Agnes, and so without seeking it further made our way back to the station and took train for Dover.

In due time we reached the pier, and after a short walk on that beautiful promenade, viewing the white cliffs of "Old England," the ringing of the bell summoned us on board, and our perambulation of Kent was at an end.